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The Art Gallery

"PARIS-MURCIE."



A French fair of extraordinary proportions, recently held in Paris, in aid of the sufferers by the inundations in Spain, one of the most profitable ventures was the publication of a paper called "Paris-Murcie." Only one number was issued, but this reached a circulation of two hundred thousand, producing nearly fifty thousand dollars. A copy of it lies before us. It is a kind of album, to which nearly every European celebrity has contributed his or her autograph, which is produced in facsimile. The feature, however, which will particularly interest our readers, is its illustrations, which, for the most part, consist of facsimile sketches by the great painters of Paris. We reproduce three of the best of these, respectively by Detaille, De Neuville and Louis Leloir. The first two named are well known in this country, and they have been fully illustrated in these columns. Leloir, our readers will remember, is the artist to whom we are indebted for the original of "Libellule," of which an adaptation for the decoration of a plaque was given in our last number. Mélingue, who contributes a sketch of a serious looking cavalier sheathing his sword, is not known even by name in this country. He may be described as the successor of Bocage, and the predecessor of Fechter, in historical melodrama; like the latter he combines the talent of the player with that of the sculptor. Sarah Bernhardt borrowed from him the idea of modelling on the stage. In *Benevenuto Cellini*, a blood-and-thunder drama in which he used to play at the Porte Saint Martin, he rough-modeled a statue in the presence of the audience; and, in impersonating *Salvator Rosa*, in another play, he made a lightning portrait of one of the brigands of the piece, and so paid his ransom as their prisoner.

Among other illustrations there is a herald on horseback, "Hérault d'Armes de Murcie," attributed to Meissonier, although it might well be doubted whether he contributed more than the signature. The drawing of the horse is positively bad, and the handling is not at all in Meissonier's usual style. The sketch has been carefully engraved by Charles Baude, however, and given the place of honor, being printed on a separate sheet. Cabanel makes a very rough sketch of his "Echo," which visitors to the Metropolitan Museum of Art will remember, for the wonderful quality of its flesh tints, as one of the most delightful pictures that hung in the old rooms of the Museum in Fourteenth Street. On the front page, Gustave Doré contributes an allegorical picture, representing an angel coming over the waters to the relief of the sufferers by the inundation.

Madrazo shows a young woman in an artist's studio, energetically pushing her umbrella through a portrait of herself which does not please her. Boulanger has a

striking crayon study, showing the backs of a male and female musician; Vibert, a pen and ink sketch of a Catalonian water-carrier; Carolus Duran, a pen portrait, of *whom* we are not told, but it is evidently that of a man of character; Gérôme, a Turkish musician; Bastien Le Page, a very rough sketch of a figure reading; and Bouguereau contributes a sketch of the mother and child in his important picture which is at present awaiting a purchaser at Knoedler's gallery in New York. Berne-Bellecour, Dubufe, Fleury, J. P. Laurens, Fantin Latour, Clairin, Hebert, Henner, and Louise Abbema complete the list of artist contributors to the "Paris-Murcie." None of the sketches are remarkable, but nearly all are interesting; some in themselves, and others for the signatures they bear.



SKETCH BY DETAILLE. CONTRIBUTED TO "PARIS-MURCIE."

BOSTON CORRESPONDENCE.

A DEFENSE OF WILLIAM M. HUNT—THE ART CLUB'S WINTER EXHIBITION—A NEW SOCIETY.

BOSTON, January 10, 1880.

IT is rumored about through a shocked and indignant community that one of your New York artists, after an inspection of the memorial exhibition at the Art Museum here of the works of the late Wm. M. Hunt, graciously conceded our lamented master the rank of "advanced amateur." The same tone of remark has been heard here from some of the young fellows who have just returned from the ateliers of Paris and Munich. To all of

which the lay public of amateurs and connoisseurs respond as with one voice: "If this be amateur work, let us have no more professional." The question is what do we want of a picture? Is it the mere display of a trade or trick learned? Is it not rather some effect, some idea, a fixing upon canvas of something in human character or the beauty of nature, that stirs the emotions? What matters it how the effect is produced so that the idea is conveyed, the sentiment stirred? Only let the inaccuracy, or indifference as to finish, be apart from the idea or effect aimed at, so as not to blur or mar that, and the painting may have been laid on with trowelfuls of mortar and brick-dust for all the great public outside the painter trade cares either now or in the years to come; for paintings with soul-

moving sentiment in them live for daily blessing and beauty long after paintings illustrating merely the skill of the man who painted them have become garget-lumber or mere school-apparatus. But it is not admitted by any means that Hunt did not know his academic anatomy, and perspective, laws of composition, and all the rest of the technique of art. He knew it so well, through such an education and experience in Europe as only those favored from birth and boyhood with wealth and social position are able to enjoy, that he came to rate it at its true value, as the mere means and instrument, not the end and sum, of art.

I thought my last letter, written in the heat of a first and single rapid view of this exhibition, might have been too enthusiastic, after hearing some of the comments of your Tile Club delegation at the show, and being chilled by the criticisms of the painters here as to flesh-tints, ears and knuckle-bones. But repeated visits to the great collection as it has been added to and re-arranged from time to time, have left me well content with my first judgment. The criticism which calls this "con amore" many-sidedness, this universal sympathy, this quick and witty expression of the genial charm of things, this dashing at the substance and spirit of a motif without regard to grammatical composition and the precepts of the professors—the criticism which calls this "amateur" is of the same sort of scholastic stupidity and technical narrowness that led poor old pedantic Ben Jonson to patronize Shakespeare; and those classic precisians of the old French drama, with their "unities" to rate "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "Lear" as farces! It is a fortunate thing that the most prominent figure in American art in this epoch of its birth and awakening is one that stands for freedom and revolt against "the letter that killeth." With a whole generation of artists at school and the French system of preternaturally perfect technique the dominant one of the day, it cannot but be wholesome that this splendid testimony should be borne to the value of the "informing spirit" above the technicalities of art, when all is done.

The winter exhibition of the Boston Art Club opened last Friday. It is only the same old two-and-six—not-

ing startling, nothing promising of importance, hardly anything fresh. The new crop of painters has not yet come up. A slender blade or two, perhaps, does pierce the soil at wide distances apart, with a water-color or a muddled head, but there is nothing from the newcomers to put life or excitement into the outlook. Leaving the old established artists who are proud of having been exhibiting their present performances for twenty-five years at these exhibitions, I like to go on trips of discovery among the newer names. But a small and quiet mill-pond is soon explored, and so are the banks of the Frog Pond, in the matter of art and artists. It is to a newcomer, to be sure, among local artists, a Mrs. Frances Houston, that the place of honor is given at the head of the gallery. But this position brings a cruel light to bear on her crude essay at a sensational full-length figure of a lady. The subject is sitting, and draped in a Burne-Jonesish dress of mystic changing red clinging closely to her limbs—so closely, alas! that not the form that belongs to the queenly head and neck—albeit the latter is defined with a rigid, long muscle that gives one a crick to contemplate—but the wretched two sticks of the lay figure can be distinctly traced from lap to knees. A better performance, although a mere study-head, is the pretty, well-modelled face of a girl in a demure hood, entitled, "The Little Puritan," by Miss Osborn, an Art Museum scholar. A new marine painter, G. L. Wason, also confirms the promise made in his debut last year with some pictures of New England waters singularly true and agreeable in their cool gray tones and quiet earnestness in drawing, and study of the truth of light, atmosphere, and distance. A curiosity, and more than that, is the first picture exhibited of Bertha Von Hillern the pedestrian, who was persuaded to become an artist by some lady friends who became interested in this sturdy little German woman during her walks against time in this city a year or two ago. It is a wood interior composed and finished in the "go-as-you-please" style inculcated among Hunt's feminine disciples—the kindly device to which Hunt had recourse to lure them on in art, and keep them from tiring and going back to crochet—but showing a real artistic sight for the points of a scene, and a free-hand facility with the brush, and no fear of using color. Other women-artists further along in this school of landscape, Miss Knowlton, editor of the "Talks on Art," Miss Becket, and Mrs. Tryon are represented in similarly characteristic works, bold in startling effects of light and color, but reckless as to detail. Selinger, the newly-returned Munich student, has a painting of a white turkey, marvellously clever and realistic in the delineation of the delicately ruffled plumage of the bird as it hangs by the legs, but after all only a turkey and sign for a provision-stall. Vinton, Gangengigl, Enneking, Hewes, Higgins, Weeks, Longfellow, Ordway, D. Fisher, Shapleigh, B. Champney, and the rest of the regular fraternity of artists are well represented.

A sketch by Wyatt Eaton of a French peasant mother and baby—two of the figures, I take it, of his well-known large picture—gives one a pleasant shock of strength, truth, and heartiness in the midst of so much that is feeble, labored, and commonplace. The drawing, especially of the baby in the foreshortening of its chubby limbs, curling and cuddling as a baby's limbs will, is delightful. The child is putting its whole soul into the comfort of imbibing the simple but evidently bounteous meal which has just been placed at its disposal, and which the mother, with equal comfort, zest, and enjoyment, assists it to reach between her big fingers. Even the rosy perspiration of the sturdy youngster as it tugs away, half asleep, has been suggested by the artist. It is a pity that he has not erased the outline marks, masterly in knowledge and feeling though they be, and given the whole a turn or two more of polish so as to shut the mouths of certain wise critics, who can see some lack of finish in the picture, and nothing more.

Two landscapes by your Macy also strengthen and enliven the walls with their real out-of-door light and air,

their moving clouds and solid brown earth, and the accurate values of objects thereon with actual distances and space between them. William Sartain sends one of the gems of the collection in an Oriental scene. The sobriety of tone that he knows how to keep in Oriental pictures conveys more of the mystery and remoteness of the East than all the colors of a Persian rug such as most artists crowd into them. In this delicacy and depth of tone and atmosphere Sartain catches much of the peculiar distinction of Fromentin, whose paintings of the Orient match so well the spirit of its faded romance and poetry.

A new club, on the model of the Century Club, made up mainly from the literary and artistic callings, has just been formed here. It has taken the fine old name of St. Botolph—from St. Botolph's of old Boston in England—and a part of its mission will be to hold monthly

for by virtues and vices. All the figures are in profile, and stretched along in one-two-three order on either side of the young man. A kneeling woman, clothed, presenting a baby who stands by himself a few steps in advance of her, utters the plea of virtue, opposing the wiles of an absolutely nude female, who—seated on the same stone with the youth, but with a blanket considerably spread under the bareness of her skin—winds her arms about his neck, while a gigantic sage preaches to him between them, and a Mephistophelean figure behind points to a bag of money. It is amazing that any painter could bear to exhibit a huge canvas so full of puerility of idea and sentiment, and utterly bad drawing, and it is doubly surprising that the son of a poet should prove so absolutely destitute of imagination and taste. The Swiss and Italian landscapes by the same artist are not so bad.

A number of artists here have banded together in revolt against the dealers, and propose to have a permanent exhibition and salesroom under their own supervision in Studio Building. The scheme is not fully developed as yet, and I will tell you more about it when the bomb-shell falls upon the fated shopkeepers. Meanwhile, Tom Robinson, Foxcroft Cole, and two or three others, have arranged an auction sale "on their own hook," and their exhibition, which includes some good foreign works, is attracting crowds. They look to save much expense in this way; but their pictures suffer by the coarse light to which they are subjected. GRETA.

BALTIMORE ART PROSPECTS.

THE DECORATIVE ART SOCIETY—KEYSER'S
"PSYCHE"—PICTURE SALES.

BALTIMORE, January 10, 1880.

IT is gratifying to lovers of art to find, with the return of material prosperity to the country, a constantly and rapidly developing taste for æsthetic culture. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in Baltimore, a city which, though noted for its architectural and monumental features, has been far behind in the cultivation of the beautiful in art, having confined itself—with that adherence to utilitarianism so long its characteristic feature—to useful rather than ornamental skill. Within the past year, however, this city has awakened from its torpor in this respect, and there has been a growing interest evinced in art, particularly in the decorative branches. In common with all parts of the country, the taste for decoration has been awakened here and has flourished.

The organization, some time since, of the Baltimore Decorative Art Society has given impetus to the movement, and the association deserves great credit for the manner in which it has fostered this refined handicraft. The first days of the Decorative Art Society were not calculated to encourage its projectors. Its existence was maintained with difficulty for some time. It speedily ran into debt, and last fall saw it deeply involved financially. In this emergency deliverance appeared in the shape of the "Frog Opera," from Providence, R. I., which was performed here two

nights for the benefit of the society. It has been often said that whatever pleases Baltimore in the way of drama or opera is sure of failure elsewhere, and that a success in Baltimore is frequently scored with attractions that fall flat in other cities. Be that as it may, the Frog Opera, though full of ridiculous nonsense, was an immense success here, and the depleted exchequer of the society suddenly assumed plethoric proportions.

One of the recent good moves of the association is the establishment of a school of instruction under direction of M. A. Newell, of the Maryland institute. The course will consist of lessons in free hand drawing (from the collection of casts in the Maryland Historical Society rooms, where the school is to be held), and painting in water colors. An effort will also be made to introduce wood carving. At the rooms of the society on North Charles Street, classes are taught in embroidery,



SKETCH BY DE NEUVILLE. CONTRIBUTED TO "PARIS-MURCIE."

exhibitions of paintings in its club-house. It has drawn on the very best materials of Boston society, "culture" being the test and standard. The old Art Club already feels its nose out of joint, but it has served a noble purpose in its day, and should not be allowed to decay. The St. Botolph is to be rather exclusive to judge from the limit of three hundred to its membership and the tone of the society represented in it. The Art Club will have a larger field more definitively left to itself by this new differentiation.

Ernest W. Longfellow, the son of the poet, opens this week an exhibition of his paintings here. The main picture occupies the whole side of the shop where they are exposed, and its size is the only thing great about it. Indeed, it is a painfully-bad piece of school-boy composition in all respects, exemplifying almost every fault that it is possible for a painting to have. It is an allegorical subject, representing youth or manhood contended